
Chapter 1

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Summary of Purpose

The Kashwitna area is rich in timber, fish, wildlife, agricultural soils, grazing lands, and recreational opportunities. As access to this area expands, a variety of uses are likely to increase rapidly. Some uses may conflict. This management plan directs state land management by the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) in the Kashwitna area. It also directs management of borough lands by the Matanuska-Susitna Borough subject to borough resolution 90-155am (p. ii). The plan identifies road and trail corridors, guides state timber sales and agricultural homestead offerings, and establishes guidelines to minimize conflicts between different resource uses.

This plan amends the Willow Subbasin Area Plan in the Kashwitna Unit. It also amends the Willow plan in the Iron Creek and Little Willow Creek subunits to consolidate agricultural homestead areas and to provide a wider buffer along Little Willow Creek.

This plan does not control uses on private land nor make decisions on fishing and hunting regulations. Fish and wildlife populations are managed by the Department of Fish and Game under rules set by the Board of Fish and the Board of Game.

How this Plan is Organized

Chapter 1 explains the reasons a management plan is needed. It explains the types of decisions made by the plan, describes the area covered by the plan, explains the relationship of the Kashwitna Management Plan to other land use plans, and describes the goals for the planning area.

Chapter 2 describes the resources and current activities in the planning area.

Chapter 3 presents the guidelines for land management that cover the Kashwitna Unit and the three subunits.

Chapter 4 describes how the management plan will be implemented. This chapter includes proposals for research and a recreation study, establishment of rights-of-way and a special use area, and amendments to the Willow Plan.

Appendix A is the glossary for this plan. **Appendix B** lists references cited in the text. **Appendix C** lists mammals likely to be found in the Kashwitna Unit and supplements the habitat summary in Chapter 2. **Appendix D** supplements the grazing guidelines in Chapter 3 with a list of live-stock diseases and treatments. **Appendix E** is an amendment to the Willow Subbasin Area Plan made during the Kashwitna planning process.

Planning Area

The Kashwitna Unit covers approximately 36,030 acres, including 29,550 acres of state land, 6,090 acres of borough land, and 390 acres of private land (see Maps 1 and 2). The unit is in the southcentral Matanuska-Susitna Borough, about 10 miles north of Willow and 75 miles from Anchorage. It is bordered on the south by the Willow Creek corridor and the Willow Creek Road. To the north is the Kashwitna River corridor. The Willow Mountain Critical Habitat Area adjoins the east side of the unit. The Parks Highway is about six miles west of the unit.

Most of the area is rolling terrain of 500-1000 foot elevation. A mixture of hardwood forests, black spruce woodlands, and open white spruce forests covers most of the land. Freshwater wetlands are scattered throughout the unit.

Relationship to Other Land Use Plans

WILLOW SUBBASIN AREA PLAN¹

The Willow Subbasin Area Plan was adopted by the Department of Natural Resources and the Matanuska-Susitna Borough in 1982. The Willow plan covers approximately 750,000 acres of state and borough lands in the southern Matanuska-Susitna Borough. It establishes the primary and secondary uses for these lands and sets general guidelines for managing multiple use.

The Willow plan established three subunits in the Kashwitna area (see Map 2). The primary and secondary designations for these areas are

<i>Subunit</i>	<i>Primary Designations</i>	<i>Secondary Designations</i>
Subunit a	State land: Fish and wildlife Forestry Borough land: Forest management	Recreation
Subunit b	State land: Fish and wildlife Forestry Borough land: Forest management	Grazing Recreation
Subunit c:	State and Borough land: Small farm agriculture	Fish and wildlife Forestry Grazing

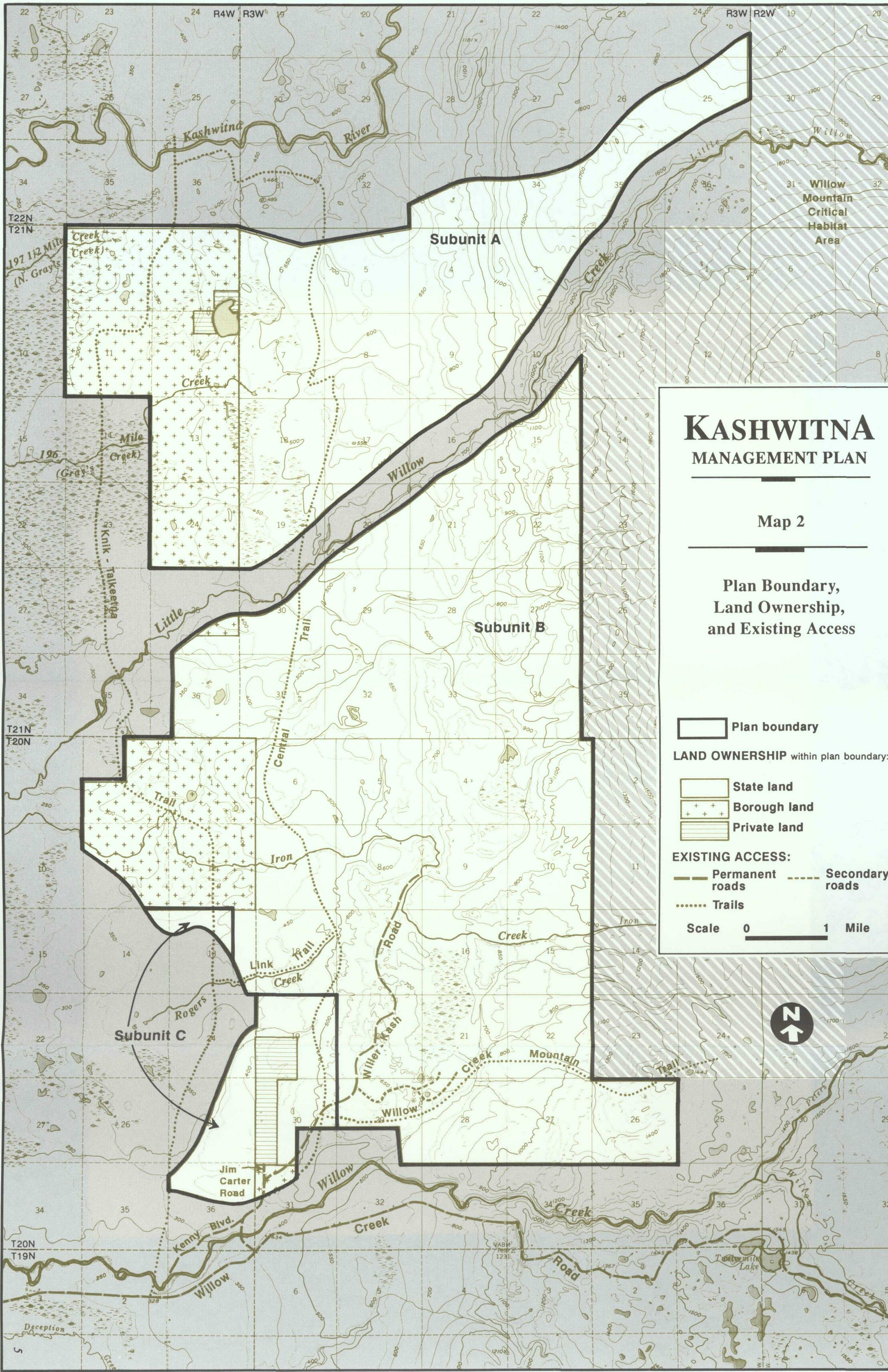
¹The Willow Subbasin Area Plan and the Susitna Area Plan are scheduled for updating beginning in FY90. The update will make the Willow Plan part of the Susitna Area Plan.



KASHWITNA MANAGEMENT PLAN

Map 1

Location of
the Kashwitna
Management Plan



KASHWITNA MANAGEMENT PLAN

Map 2

Plan Boundary,
Land Ownership,
and Existing Access

Plan boundary

LAND OWNERSHIP within plan boundary:

- State land
- Borough land
- Private land

EXISTING ACCESS:

- Permanent roads
- Secondary roads
- Trails

Scale 0 1 Mile

The Willow plan also stated that "a management plan will be necessary to design roads, schedule timber and farm sales, and develop detailed management guidelines to minimize conflicts among land users." This plan fulfills that requirement and amends the Willow plan within the Kashwitna Unit. After adoption, the plan supersedes the Willow Plan in the Kashwitna Unit. It also proposes an amendment to the agricultural homestead areas in the Iron Creek and Little Willow Creek subunits of the Willow plan.

SUSITNA FORESTRY GUIDELINES

The Susitna Forestry Guidelines provide rules for timber management on state lands throughout the Susitna Valley. Unless otherwise specified in this plan, the Susitna Forestry Guidelines apply to the Kashwitna Unit.

How this Plan Was Developed

PLANNING TEAM

The Kashwitna Management Plan was developed by an interagency team with representatives from

Department of Natural Resources

Division of Agriculture

Division of Forestry

Division of Land and Water

Division of Mining

Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation

Department of Fish and Game

Department of Transportation and Public Facilities

Matanuska-Susitna Borough.

Planning team meetings were coordinated by staff from the DNR Division of Land and Water, Land and Resources Section.

CITIZENS' ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The citizens' advisory committee for the Susitna Forestry Guidelines reviewed draft proposals for Kashwitna guidelines and the agency and public review drafts of the plan. The committee included representatives from about 80 organizations interested in forest management issues in the Susitna Valley.

PUBLIC REVIEW

A public meeting in October 1986 to review proposals for the main north-south Kashwitna Road helped identify issues for the Kashwitna Management Plan. The public review draft of the plan was reviewed by the public at public meetings in Willow, Wasilla-Palmer (Cottonwood Creek), and Anchorage in May 1990. Comments on the draft plan were also received by mail and by phone. The final plan was available for review in September and October 1990.

PLANNING PROCESS

Identify issues. Overall guidance for the management plan came from the Willow Subbasin Area Plan. The planning team identified additional land management issues from a public meeting on a right-of-way permit application for the Kashwitna Road, and other public and agency comments.

Collect information. General resource information was gathered during the Susitna Forestry Guidelines planning process. The Susitna Forestry Guidelines published background reports on timber resources, fish and wildlife, recreation, cultural resources, access and transportation, and land ownership that include information on the Kashwitna area. Additional site-specific information was developed from aerial photography.

Develop agency review draft plan. The planning team developed draft proposals for the Kashwitna area. Proposals were reviewed at a citizens' advisory committee meeting. The planning staff wrote the agency review draft and distributed it for review by the planning team and advisory committee. The plan was then revised and circulated for public review.

Public reviews draft plan. The draft plan was reviewed at public meetings in Willow, Wasilla, and Anchorage in May 1990. Comments were also received by mail and by phone.

Develop final plan. The draft plan was revised following public comment. A summary of changes to the draft plan was sent to the planning team and advisory committee and mailing list. A notice of the intent to adopt the final plan was published, and 30 days allowed for final comment.

Adopt final plan. The final plan was signed by the commissioners of the Department of Natural Resources and the Department of Fish and Game. State land management decisions in the Kashwitna Area must be consistent with the management plan. The Borough Planning Commission and Assembly will review the plan and determine whether or not to adopt it for borough lands.

Who Implements the Plan

The Department of Natural Resources is the land manager for state lands. The Matanuska-Susitna Borough is the land manager for borough lands. The divisions of DNR are responsible for managing state lands according to the plan. The Department of Fish and Game manages fish and wildlife populations on all lands in the planning area. A summary of the main land management responsibilities in this area follows.

DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES (DNR)

Division of Land and Water

Most state land management in the Kashwitna area is the responsibility of the DNR Division of Land and Water (DLW). This division adjudicates requests for grazing permits and leases, agricultural homestead offerings, right-of-way applications, and other authorizations for the surface use of state lands. It will also be responsible for managing the Special Use Area proposed in Chapters 3 and 4. Requests for permits, leases, and other authorizations to use state land should be sent to

Mat-Su Area Office
DNR Division of Land & Water
1830 E. Parks Highway, Suite 116A
Wasilla, AK 99510

Division of Forestry

The Division of Forestry designs, offers, and inspects commercial timber sales and areas open for harvest of wood for personal use. Requests for timber sales or personal use permits should be sent to

Mat-Su Area Office
DNR Division of Forestry
P.O. Box 520455
Big Lake, AK 99652

Division of Mining

The Division of Mining oversees mineral exploration and development on state land. Requests for permits for mining exploration activities and permits to operate on valid state mining claims should be sent to

DNR Division of Mining
P.O. Box 107005
Anchorage, AK 99510

Division of Oil and Gas

The Division of Oil and Gas administers oil and gas leases and related permits on state lands. Requests for oil and gas lease sales or geophysical prospecting permits (seismic testing) should be sent to

DNR Division of Oil and Gas
P.O. Box 107005
Anchorage, AK 99510

DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME (DFG)

The Department of Fish and Game manages fish and wildlife populations. The Board of Fish and the Board of Game set regulations for hunting and fishing. DFG permits are required for activities occurring within the bed or banks of an anadromous waterbody and for any instream activities affecting anadromous waterbodies, such as bridge crossings, bank stabilization, vehicle fordings, and gravel removal. Requests for permits for activities in anadromous waterbodies should be sent to

DFG Habitat Division
333 Raspberry Road
Anchorage, AK 99518

Requests for information on hunting and fishing regulations should be sent to the Wildlife Conservation Division at the same address.

MATANUSKA-SUSITNA BOROUGH

The Matanuska-Susitna Borough manages borough lands in this area. Requests for permits, leases, or other authorizations to use borough lands should be sent to

Matanuska-Susitna Borough
Division of Public Lands
350 E. Dahlia Avenue
Palmer, AK 99645

Goals and Overview of Management Intent

This plan is designed to balance competing interests in state and borough lands in the Kashwitna Unit. It is intended to contribute to statewide goals in a manner appropriate to the resources, economy, and communities of the area. The statewide goals, the strategy of the Kashwitna Management Plan to contribute to those goals, and an overview of management intent follow. See Chapter 3 for a detailed description of management intent and management guidelines.

GOALS

Economic development: Provide jobs and income through the management of state and borough lands and resources to support a vital, self-sustaining local and statewide economy.

The Kashwitna Management Plan contributes to this goal by providing opportunities for commercial and personal use timber harvest, agricultural development, grazing, and harvest of fish and wildlife, and allowing for mineral development. It also identifies access routes to resources with economic potential.

Public use: Provide diverse opportunities for public use of state and borough lands, such as hunting, fishing, recreation, and firewood collection.

This plan maintains and enhances opportunities for management of fish and wildlife habitat and populations and recreation. It provides and protects road and trail access routes, buffers important waterbodies and the Willer-Kash Road corridor from timber harvesting and grazing, and sets guidelines to protect and enhance habitat and recreation resources when development occurs. Three recreation sites are identified and a recreation study of Little Willow Creek is required. Some forest lands will supply wood for personal use.

Private land: Provide opportunities for the private ownership of state and borough land.

Subunit c is designated for agricultural use. Two agricultural homesteads exist in this subunit and eight more are proposed for sale. Agricultural homesteads convey land to private ownership subject to agricultural covenants.

Quality of life: Maintain or enhance the quality of the natural environment and cultural resources, and the character of existing communities.

The guidelines for this area contribute to the maintenance and enhancement of the natural environment. Guidelines are included to protect or enhance wildlife habitat, water quality, and recreation opportunities. There are no communities in this unit, but this area should contribute recreational and economic opportunities to nearby communities. No known cultural sites exist in this unit, but guidelines are included to protect any sites identified in the future.

Fiscal costs: Minimize the costs of providing necessary government services and facilities, such as state land management programs, schools, and transportation facilities.

This plan identifies routes to coordinate access to multiple resource values. Some routes will be pioneered by timber contractors and may not need government funding.

Public safety: Protect public safety. For example, avoid development in areas of natural hazards.

No significant natural hazards (for example, avalanches or floods) have been identified in the areas proposed for sale of agricultural rights or resource development. Road guidelines are intended to ensure safe design of new roads.

OVERVIEW OF MANAGEMENT INTENT

The Kashwitna unit is intended for multiple use management emphasizing fish and wildlife habitat and forestry. Land is provided for small farms in Subunit c, and grazing is allowed in subunits b and c. Hiking, snowmobiling, skiing, and other forms of recreation (including hunting and fishing) are encouraged. The unit is currently a heavily used hunting area. It is excellent spring and fall moose habitat and serves as a moose migration corridor between Willow Mountain and the lowlands. The moose habitat value could be improved by using forest management to convert mature hardwood stands into a continuous supply of moose browse. The trails in this unit are important for hunting access and other recreation use.

Grazing is a secondary use in subunits b and c. Grazing could complement the agricultural homesteads in Subunit c and land adjacent to the Kashwitna Unit.

Existing and proposed roads and trails will provide access for forestry, agriculture, grazing, recreation, and habitat management. The plan also identifies proposed routes to borough lands and the Willow Mountain Critical Habitat Area.

All lands in subunits a and b are open for new mineral entry. Subunit c is closed to new mineral entry to avoid conflicts between agricultural development and mining.